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POWERS WELCOME

BY BURL OSBORNE

BIG STONE GAP, VA., MARCH 11 (AP)--LOCAL RESIDENTS WAITED WITH NO OBVIOUS EXCITEMENT TODAY FOR THE WELCOMING CELEBRATION THEY WILL GIVE U2 PILOT FRANCIS GARY POWERS TOMORROW AFTERNOON.

POWERS, MAKING HIS FIRST VISIT TO HIS NATIVE WISE COUNTY SINCE HIS RELEASE FROM A RUSSIAN PRISON, WAS BELIEVED IN THE AREA TODAY--PROBABLY SEEING RELATIVES.

THE SPY PILOT IS SCHEDULED TO APPEAR AT 2 P.M. TOMORROW FOR THE "WELCOME HOME" PROGRAM WHIPPED UP BY LOCAL OFFICIALS.

MEANTIME, A CITIZENS' COMMITTEE MOVED AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR THE PROGRAM AT THE NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY HERE. SOME 500 FOLDING CHAIRS WERE SET UP ON THE BARE FLOOR OF THE ARMORY, WHICH WILL ACCOMMODATE 1,500 PERSONS--SO ABOUT 1,000 MAY HAVE TO STAND UP TOMORROW.

DECORATIONS OF RED, WHITE AND BLUE BUNTING ARE TO BE HUNG IN THE ARMORY, BUT DOWNTOWN BIG STONE GAP WAS BARE OF DECORATIONS TODAY.

MAYORS FROM SEVEN COUNTY TOWNS--NORTON, APPALACHIA, WISE, POUND, COEBURN, ST. PAUL AND BIG STONE GAP--ARE EXPECTED AT THE CEREMONIES IN ADDITION TO REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, THE ARMY RESERVE, AND THE PRESIDENT OF MILLIGAN COLLEGE, DEAN E. WALKER.

TWO MEMBERS OF THE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, C.L. KILGORE AND N.B. PARSONS, ALSO HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL ATTEND, AS HAS E.K. SMITH, SENIOR VICE COMMANDER OF THE VIRGINIA VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

BUT THE TOP-LEVEL GUEST LIST CONTINUED TO DWINDLE. ONLY REP. W. PAT JENNINGS, D-VA., NOW APPEARS LIKELY TO BE HERE--AND HIS PRESENCE IS NOT ASSURED.

VIRGINIA GOV. ALBERT S. HARRISON JR. AND U.S. SENS. HARRY F. BYRD AND A. WILLIS ROBERTSON WERE INVITED, BUT NONE CAN COME.

MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR THE "WELCOME HOME" CELEBRATION SAID THEY HOPED THE ENTIRE PROGRAM COULD BE COMPLETED IN NO MORE THAN ONE HOUR. IT WILL ALL BE INSIDE THE ARMORY.

CARL MCAFEE, ATTORNEY AND CLOSE FRIEND OF THE POWERS FAMILY, SAID TODAY THE U2 PILOT WAS "IN THE AREA" BUT WOULDN'T BE MORE PRECISE. HIS PARENTS, MR. AND MRS. OLIVER POWERS, LIVE IN NEARBY POUND.

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